

## Free To Be Me

Jun 23, 2020 | Sarah Foster

New York-based artist [Malike Sidibe](#) hails originally from the Ivory Coast and Guinea, but he is used to being mixed up with the late, [great Malian portrait photographer](#) of nearly the same name. Ironically, the spelling was originally identical, but his father changed it from Malick to Malike when they moved to the U.S. in 2010. Aside from a shared name and native language, the work of both artists involves insightful, playfully inventive portraits about cultural identity, friendship, and community.

Luckily this [Malike](#) is very much still alive, bursting with energy and creativity. Having studied fashion design before turning his passion towards photography, Malike transfers his keen sense of the human form into an almost physical quality to his compositions and his use of color, line, pattern and texture. With a variety of techniques and lighting styles, he crafts unique approaches to each subject he shoots, from direct and authentic environmental portraits to surreal explorations of personal style and self-expression. In his words:

*"The only thing on my mind is creating beautiful images, and the details all tend to fall into place as long as I'm prepared. I get my inspiration from my everyday surroundings and experiences. All my life, my family and I have been migrating from city to city. We never stayed in one place for more than 5 years when I was younger. Every place I've lived has inspired my work, sometimes in ways that I can't explain. The stories I get from the people I meet and their personalities move me to create."*

Malike recently joined [The Good Brigade](#) which is a boutique photo agency and a Getty Images contributor, giving me the opportunity to collaborate with them on a bespoke shoot for our exclusive collection. We wanted to achieve a series of authentic, direct, and accessible studio portraits that he could shoot in a relaxed way with real friends. Malike often works with vivid backdrops, props and wardrobe, but here he kept the formal elements stripped down and simple, freeing him and his models to just be present in the moment, focusing on pure body language and open emotion. Exploding with vibrancy, each model's individual personality comes shining through in these highly expressive images.